

## Accessing Benefit Programs During COVID-19 Part One

### Looking for a Discount on your License Plate? Illinois Benefit Access Program

This program offers **qualified applicants a discount on their automobile license plate**, for one vehicle per household, and **free rides on public transit** such as PACE or Metra. Applicants must be Illinois residents, either age 65+ or persons with disabilities age 18-59.

Last January, Governor JB Pritzker raised the income eligibility limits on the Benefit Access Program. With this adjustment, more older adults and persons with disabilities will be eligible for free rides on public transportation and for license plate discounts. It's important to note that the license plate registration fee paid by a vehicle owner with an approved Benefit Access application will continue to be \$24.00.

Any person who applied in 2019 but were denied based on 2018 income using the previous income limits may re-apply using their 2019 income. Once approved, benefits are valid for two years.

- Applications must be filed online.
- Those already receiving it are covered for two years, and may re-apply not more than 90 days before their current eligibility expires.
- It takes the Illinois Department on Aging up to twelve weeks to process an application.

**Due to COVID-19, the Secretary of State has extended the expiration dates for driver's licenses, ID cards and vehicle registrations at least 90 days after the Governor's June 1 disaster proclamation executive order ends.**

For assistance in applying, call the Illinois Department on Aging's Senior Helpline at (800) 252-8966

To learn more about the Benefit Access Program, [click here](#).

### Need Assistance Paying your Utility Bills? Low Income Home Energy Assistance Program (LIHEAP)

The LIHEAP application period has been extended until June 30, 2020, or until funding is exhausted. Due to COVID-19 precautions, local agencies are closed to the public, however they are taking applications remotely.

For information on how to apply for LIHEAP, [click here](#).

### In Need of Medicaid Assistance? Medicaid Asset Limits Waived during COVID-19 Pandemic

Medicaid has both an income and an asset limit, and applicants must meet both in order to qualify. The income limit for Aid to the Aged, Blind, and Disabled (AABD) Medicare is \$12,756 for a single person or \$17,244 for a couple. The asset limit is

\$2,000 for a single person or \$3,000 for a couple, not including the value of a home, car, personal property, or household goods. (Medicaid provided under the Patient Protection and Affordable Care Act has a higher income limit and no asset limit.)

During the COVID-19 pandemic, the Illinois Department of Healthcare and Family Services has waived the asset limit, but the income limit is still in effect. Thus, someone whose income is under the income limit is eligible, even if resources exceed that limit.

**For further information about Medicaid, any of the other benefits listed above or assistance in applying for benefits, contact the Care Coordination Unit in your county.**

**DuPage County**

DuPage County Community Services  
630-407-6500  
[www.dupageco.org/seniorsvcs](http://www.dupageco.org/seniorsvcs)

**Grundy County**

Grundy County Health Department  
815-941-3404  
[www.grundyco.org/health](http://www.grundyco.org/health)

**Kane County**

Senior Services Associates  
847-741-0404  
[www.seniorservicesassoc.org](http://www.seniorservicesassoc.org)

**Kankakee County**

Catholic Charities, Diocese of Joliet  
815-523-9918  
[www.catholiccharitiesjoliet.org](http://www.catholiccharitiesjoliet.org)

**Kendall County**

Senior Services Associates  
630-553-5777  
[www.seniorservicesassoc.org](http://www.seniorservicesassoc.org)

**Lake County**

Catholic Charities, Archdiocese of Chicago  
847-546-5733  
[www.catholiccharities.net](http://www.catholiccharities.net)

**McHenry County**

Senior Services Associates  
815-344-3555  
[www.seniorservicesassoc.org](http://www.seniorservicesassoc.org)

**Will County**

Senior Services of Will  
815-723-9713  
[www.willcountyseniors.org](http://www.willcountyseniors.org)

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**Please look for our next resource email that will discuss accessing additional benefit programs including Medicare and Social Security**

To support our community while we shelter in place, AgeGuide will be sharing new resources each week to help older adults and their loved ones stay informed, healthy and connected. AgeGuide has also compiled resources to support older adult and families during COVID-19 on its website which will be updated regularly. To see our resource page, [click here](#).

AgeGuide Northeastern Illinois was established in 1974. Services funded or coordinated by AgeGuide meet the diverse needs of the most rapidly growing population in Illinois. Over 681,000 seniors age 60 and over live in the agency's eight-county service area:

**DuPage, Grundy, Kane, Kankakee, Kendall, Lake, McHenry, and Will Counties**

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